

Introduction: First International Conference on Environmental Mutagenesis in Human Populations at Risk

by William W. Au¹ and Wagida R. Anwar²

The First International Conference on Environmental Mutagenesis in Human Populations at Risk was held in Cairo, Egypt during January 19–24, 1992. The conference was organized by Wagida Anwar of the Ain Shams University, Egypt and William Au of The University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas, under the auspices of a diverse international array of sponsors. The objective of the conference was to discuss the state of our knowledge about environmental, biological, genetic and reproductive problems affecting humans from exposure to mutagenic agents. Emphasis was placed on promoting the flow of the knowledge from scientists in developed countries to scientists in developing countries, as well as the recognition of the special problems faced by scientists in developing countries. These aims were accomplished as judged by the enthusiastic participation by scientists from around the world and by positive feedback from their evaluation of the conference. In addition, there were overwhelming requests from participants to extend the interactions and exchange of ideas through a second international conference on the same topic. Three locations outside of Egypt have been nominated and organizational activities will be initiated soon for the second conference, which will be in 1995.

The conference in Egypt was co-sponsored by the Ain Shams University of Cairo, Egypt; the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas; the World Health Organization; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The conference was also supported financially by the following organizations, listed in alphabetical order: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Atlanta, Georgia; Ain Shams University, Egypt; British Council in Egypt; Cabinet of Ministers, Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency; Commission of European Communities; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, Germany; Egyptian Environmental Mutagen Society; ICI Central Toxicology

Laboratory, UK; International Association of Environmental Mutagen Societies; Ministry of International Cooperation and United States Agency for International Development; National Population Council, Egypt; National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, USA; Shell Oil Company, Egypt; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; United Nations Environmental Programme; University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, Texas; Upjohn Company, Kalamazoo, Michigan; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, DC and Research Triangle Park, NC; and the World Health Organization.

A total of 199 abstracts from 31 countries were received for presentation in the conference. Over 200 participants attended the 6-day conference. Both oral and poster presentations were conducted and the last session of the conference was organized as a panel discussion. The panel provided conclusions of the conference and recommendations for future directions. A report of the panel discussion is presented in this monograph. Because the conference was held in Egypt and there was extensive participation from scientists of developing countries, the recommendations are mainly targeted toward these countries. Scientists from around the world are requested to assist in achieving the objectives of the recommendations.

A total of 56 manuscripts were submitted from invited and contributing speakers for publication in this monograph. These manuscripts were reviewed by the co-editors and organized by topics which are similar to those in the conference.

The conference could not have been possible without the generous support and assistance of numerous dedicated individuals, such as members of the International Advisory Board, the Egyptian Advisory Board, the Egyptian Scientific Committee and those who have provided their effort during the 6-day conference. A special thanks should be given to the late F. H. Sobels, Chairman of our International Advisory Board, who consulted with us weekly during the last 2 years to provide expert advice and assistance for the conference. We are also grateful to *Environmental Health Perspectives Supplements* for publishing the conference manuscripts.

¹Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health, The University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, TX 77555-1010.

²Department of Community, Environmental and Occupational Medicine, Ain Shams University, Abbassia, Cairo, Egypt.